

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Saturday 28 October 1978

CG NIDC 78/252

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

Top Secret

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Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00975A030900010046-8

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Saturday, 28 October 1978.

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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ETHIOPIA-ERITREA: Negotiations

25X1 [redacted] //Negotiations between the Ethiopian Govern-
ment and the various Eritrean guerrilla factions may begin soon,
even though neither side appears ready to make the concessions
necessary for success. They may be ready to begin talks now be-
cause of recent increased pressure from some of their principal
allies.

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25X1 [redacted] Leaders of the three principal Eritrean insurgent
groups assembled in Khartoum, Sudan this week to prepare for
negotiations with the Ethiopian Government. The talks apparently
may begin soon in Tripoli, Libya. The Sudanese, who have long
provided the Eritreans with aid and sanctuary, have threatened
to cut off their support unless the Eritreans establish a uni-
fied negotiating position. The rebels, however, remain deeply
divided over religious, personal, and ideological issues.

25X1 [redacted] The USSR and Cuba have pressed the Ethiopians for
some time to solve the Eritrean problem through negotiation.
Ethiopian leader Mengistu has resisted these pressures thus far,
but he may now be willing to begin talks on the condition that
Soviet and Cuban military support continues uninterrupted. [redacted]

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[redacted] //Neither the Mengistu government nor the rebels have thus far been interested in negotiations except on their own terms. The Ethiopians are unwilling to grant independence to the Eritreans, and the insurgents are unwilling to accept subservience to Addis Ababa's authority. [redacted]

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ARAB STATES: Summit Meeting

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Developments in the Middle East during the past few days probably have lessened the likelihood of a major quarrel erupting between Arab hardliners and moderates when they meet in Baghdad next week to talk about the Camp David accords. The successful conclusion of reconciliation talks between Iraq and Syria this week, Israel's decision to "thicken" West Bank settlements, and speculation about a move of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the Office of the Prime Minister to East Jerusalem have bolstered the hand of the hardliners and made it harder for Saudi Arabia and other moderates to blunt anti-Egyptian measures. The moderate tone of the communique issued following the Iraqi-Syrian talks suggests, however, that an effort will be made at Baghdad to come up with proposals acceptable to all the conferees.

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A preparatory meeting of foreign ministers will begin on Monday to plan the agenda for the heads-of-state summit scheduled for 2 November. The 22 members of the Arab League, with the exception of Egypt, will be represented at Baghdad.

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The summit will probably call for reaffirmation of the 1974 Rabat resolution recognizing the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and for increased moral and financial support to Palestinians in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

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[] It could also reiterate support for previous Arab League resolutions that condemn any Arab state that signs a separate peace treaty with Israel and result in new demands for imposition of economic and diplomatic sanctions. We suspect that the hardliners will press for such condemnations and sanctions as a minimal plank and that they will also urge that Arab League headquarters be moved from Cairo.

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[] The hardliners may also call for the creation of a joint Syrian-Iraqi-Jordanian-PLO command to reestablish the Eastern Front against Israel. While such a move would probably be little more than a cosmetic gesture, it would make it more difficult for Jordan to join the peace negotiations. It is not clear what position the Arab leaders will take on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the reconvening of a Geneva peace conference.

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[] The moderate states seem to have given up on their attempts to have Egypt at the meeting and to delay the convening of the Arab heads of state. The moderates appear to have no strategy for the conferences. They will try to minimize attacks on Egypt and limit any resolutions to bland formulations on the need for unity.

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[] Egypt has ignored the Baghdad summit because President Sadat is angered by the lack of public support from Saudi Arabia and Jordan and the strong condemnations from Syria and Arab radicals. Sadat has done very little to help the Arab moderates develop a position from which they can stave off measures that will further divide Arab ranks and impede efforts at broadening peace negotiations. Sadat has been in touch with Saudi leaders and Sudanese President Numayri, but we have no evidence that the contacts have produced a coordinated strategy. Sadat has studiously ignored Jordan's King Hussein, and the relationship between the two leaders is now deeply troubled.

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[] Sadat's disdainful attitude toward the summit conveys an unrealistic notion that Egypt is invulnerable to Arab criticism. We suspect that at another level Sadat is trying to hide the fact that he has virtually no ability to influence the course of the summit and is deeply concerned that the moderate Arabs will not have the courage to stand up to the more cohesive bloc headed by Syria and Iraq.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SUDAN: Domestic Disarray

[REDACTED] //Sudanese President Numayri's statement of support on 21 October for the Camp David accords has resulted in a threat by Ansar leader Sadiq al-Mahdi to resign from the Sudan

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Socialist Union, the country's only legal political organization. Although Sadiq, a leading conservative, has for the moment been dissuaded from an open break with Numayri, the incident is an indication of the increasing factionalism in Sudan and of the heightened struggle for control of the Sudanese Socialist Union, the key to government leadership.//

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Numayri's public support of Egyptian President Sadat was contrary to the Sudanese Socialist Union's sentiment on the Camp David accords

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Sadiq and the Ansars have traditionally been anti-Egyptian, and Numayri's endorsement of the accords was also a blow to Sadiq's personal standing. Since his return from exile last year under Numayri's program of reconciliation with opponents, Sadiq has been pressed by his followers to secure both tangible rewards and policy decisions for his reconciliation with Numayri.//

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One of the Ansar goals--and a condition for Sadiq's return--was Numayri's apparent agreement in principle to hold elections for all offices in the Socialist Union, possibly in early 1979. Most of the present members of the Socialist Union, many of whom are ex-military officers or technocrats appointed by Numayri, are opposed to new elections. These officials, including Vice President Abul Gassim, who is secretary general of the Socialist Union, are probably correct in their belief that they could not win free elections and that the traditional political groups, like the Ansar's Umma Party, would come to dominate the Socialist Union.

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Although Numayri has been deft in handling Sudan's contending political groups, failure to make good on his promises to Sadiq could lead to an open break with the Ansar leader and stimulate renewed antigovernment plotting.//

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USSR-VIETNAM: Impending Visit

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The Soviets announced Thursday that North Vietnamese party chief Le Duan and Prime Minister Pham Van Dong will be visiting the USSR.

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The USSR is concerned that Vietnam not undercut the Soviets' and Hanoi's recent efforts to improve their position vis-a-vis China in Southeast Asia or--more important--significantly increase the chances of a Sino-Soviet confrontation over Indochina. The Soviets, however, will be inclined to give the Vietnamese some measure of increased support.

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[REDACTED] The Vietnamese probably will also ask for and receive additional commitments of food aid to help overcome additional food shortages brought on by recent flooding in Vietnam. There is no evidence at present, however, that they need or will ask for substantial Soviet military assistance. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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USSR-CHINA: Border Incidents

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[REDACTED] *The Soviets attempted to reconvene the Sino-Soviet border railroad commission recently for the first time in 12 years. The Soviet effort, which was followed by a temporary lull in polemics against China, suggests that Moscow was trying to quiet the Sino-Soviet dispute during a period of sensitive diplomatic discussions with the US.*

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[REDACTED] Meetings between 24 August and 30 September to attempt to develop an agenda ended in a complete deadlock, and there is no indication that further discussions will take place. The Chinese wanted to discuss broader border issues as well as alleged Soviet maintenance activities on the Chinese side of the border. The Soviets rejected these suggestions, and no agenda was prepared for further meetings.

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[REDACTED] Heated, officially sanctioned, exchanges between the two sides less than two weeks after the talks ended underscore the current bitterness of the rivalry as well as the failure of the USSR to achieve even slight improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. Each side is now accusing the other of unwillingness to make fundamental changes necessary to improve relations.

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[REDACTED] The fact that a Chinese official revealed the breakdown in the railroad talks, along with recent Chinese references to past small-scale border incidents, suggests that Peking seeks to diminish any impression of progress in Sino-Soviet relations.

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BRIEFS

India

[] Indian Foreign Minister Vajpayee has temporarily postponed his official visit to China, scheduled to begin on Monday, because of illness. Vajpayee reportedly became ill last weekend while visiting Nepal and is hospitalized in New Delhi for what is described in the press as intestinal inflammation. Vajpayee was hospitalized and treated for a similar condition last August.

[] There is no indication that the Indians postponed the trip for political reasons, even though the decision to have Vajpayee visit China--a significant forward step in the normalization of bilateral relations--is somewhat controversial in India.

[] Vajpayee intends to assess the prospects for settlement of the Sino-Indian border dispute while in Peking. Some Indians question whether New Delhi has adequately considered all aspects of this complex problem. No dramatic breakthrough on the border issue is expected, but Vajpayee's impending visit could lead to closer economic and cultural ties and pave the way for border talks. []

USSR

[] The Soviets have increased by five fold--from one to five microwatts per square centimeter--the maximum allowable level of microwave radiation for the general population. The

new limit is part of a revised general population standard allowing two to five times higher continuous exposure levels over most of the nonionizing electromagnetic radiation spectrum.

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[redacted] The new standard apparently represents a compromise in a dispute between the Academy of Science and the Academy of Medical Science over interpreting experimental evidence. Further changes in Soviet electromagnetic radiation safety standards are probable.



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